



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

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LL-01 – Strategy and Planning
Interview Title:
(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]
Interview Code:
LL-01 [REDACTED] b(3), (v)
Date/Time:
10/21/2015; 1640-1730
Location:
New York, NY
Purpose:
To elicit interviewee's thoughts on U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.
Interviewees: (Either list interviewees below, attach sign-in sheet to this document or hyperlink to a file)
SIGAR Attendees:
Candace Rondeaux, Matthew Sternenberger
Sourcing Conditions (On the Record/On Background/etc.): On Background
Recorded: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Recording File Record Number (if recorded):
Prepared By: (Name, title and date) Matthew Sternenberger
Reviewed By: (Name, title and date)
Key Topics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• The Taliban• Af/Pak Relations

Introduction

U.S. engagement in Afghanistan on the development and the security side must go hand in hand. Security alone won't fix everything. It is up to the U.S. as to how to approach it. The creation of the SRAP created the hyphenation of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I am unsure if that connection is still necessary. The message needs to be that work is not done and the mission is not over yet. More focus on development in Afghanistan will help counter the Taliban. If there are no jobs, that is the atmosphere in which the Taliban thrive. We need to counter the Taliban narrative.

To fix a lot of the issues, it [dialogue] needs to be bilateral, not through a third party. There are bilateral issues that are resolvable. Since the start of the Ghani government, relations have improved and that has trickled down, even in the security sector. We were near an MOU between the ISI and the Afghan intelligence service. We held direct talks, but still trust issues persist. We [Pakistan and Afghanistan] had a good start for the first eight or nine months [of the new Afghan government], then external players came in and spoiled it. Also, we couldn't deliver direct talks



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with the Taliban, which was a major demand of the Afghan government. The rhetoric calmed down a bit now, but may return. Today talks are happening at all levels. Ghani has a delicate balancing act toward Pakistan, as Ghani is seen as a traitor according to Karzai. Now we are moving in the right direction, but we still need encouragement. U.S. and China, for example could offer this [encouragement] as they are trusted by the Afghans. Once on we are on the road to mending our relationship, other groups like the Taliban will see we are serious about this.

The Taliban

[Mullah Akhtar Mohammad] Mansour has reasserted himself. The period of peace that took place after death of [Mullah] Omar is a sign that the Taliban is serious [about engagement]. The little Taliban insurgencies within the Taliban have quieted down and will also help the mending process. The main legislative body or shura of the Taliban (which we do not call Quetta), is the most functional of all their other offices. The Qatar office falls in line with them so that is also a good sign.

Taliban factionalism already existed before the announcement of the death of Omar. The announcement that came out about the Taliban open to dialogue on a peace process came out before the death announcement of Omar. This means that Mansour wanted peace since the message came out days before the death announcement – he approved or even wrote the message. If the Taliban wanted a role in the government, you can't just say no as then they won't talk. They would also need to disarm and then join the security forces or something – you can't just expect an insurgency to become part of the government. You also can't expect a ceasefire at the start of negotiations or there would be no need for negotiations.

Af/Pak Relations

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) do not think that the Durand Line is an issue anymore but it crops up when an Afghan leader needs attention. It is the internationally recognized border. The U.N. recognized it. **"As a confidence building measure, just not mentioned the issue would be great."** We could also have ministerial dialogue on trade or similar issues. None of these issues [water rights or APTA] would be a major issue to the normalization of trade. These are working level issues that can be resolved.

The mere fact that the NDS and the ISI both finalized the MOU, despite Karzai's screaming, shows that the MOU could have been implemented. For example, the death announcement of Mullah Omar could have been coordinated. If NDS had told the ISI, they might have been able to hold the news for 15 days in order to coordinate a way forward. Also general information exchanges on a daily basis would have occurred which can't now. If the ISI is looking for a person and believe they are in Afghanistan they can't share that information or vice versa. With the MOU, we could have done this on a military basis. We saw value in the MOU and I am sure the Afghans did too.

The role of internal spoilers is overplayed in Afghanistan and the west. Not everyone in the [Pakistan] government agrees with the policies, but then again, no government can say that. Their ability to spoil is overplayed. There also is no evidence that the terrorist incidents in Afghanistan are tied to the ISI. We have asked for the evidence but have not received any. We have made assurances at the highest levels against any such support. We would also like to know if some elements of the ISI are providing such support. There are however some elements in Pakistan, but not in the government that may be doing something [in Afghanistan to support the Taliban].

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Also, the relationship from the last ten years has dramatically changed since Ghani's two day visit to Islamabad. If mistakes were made, I think we just need to move ahead.

Pakistan over the last five years has called for a managed transition. We are not saying stay, but we are not saying go, especially in regards to security and the economy. There is a clear realization for the need to stay the course economically and that some security presence extension for a limited time may not hurt. [The extended security presence] will make reconciliation with the Taliban difficult, but (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) need to show some stability there



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[in Afghanistan]. Look at Kunduz, it was not until security assistance came in that the Taliban were forced to withdrawal.